

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIEP-01 /054 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1556

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

FAA BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR

SUBJ: CIVAIR: AIR FRANCE FLEET RENEWAL

1. SUMMARY--FINANCE MINISTER FOURCADE HAS ANNOUNCED GOF WILL NOT REOPEN MERCURE 100 ASSEMBLY LINE. AIR FRANCE EXPECTED BE PERMITTED LEASE 737'S AS SHORT TERM SOLUTION FOR FLEET REPLACEMENT, BUT NO DECISION YET. INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE IS TO DISCUSS QUESTION JULY 23. OVER LONGER TERM GOF INTENDS BUILD ALONE OR WITH PARTNERS "NEW" AIRCRAFT TO MEET AIR FRANCE NEEDS, BUT THIS COULD BE DERIVATIVE OF MERCURE FOR MEDIUM RANGE AND AIRBUS FOR LONGER RANGE. CFM-56 ENGINE WILL BE A MUST IN ANY NEW PROJECT. GOF'S PLANS COULD BE INFLUENCED BY US-FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRY COOPERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. FINANCE MINISTER FOURCADE, WHO TOUCHED OFF THE CONTROVERSY ON AIR FRANCE FLEET RENEWAL LAST FEBRUARY BY INSISTING THAT AIR FRANCE BE FORCED TO BUY MERCURE 100 AS REPLACEMENT FOR ITS CARAVELLES, HAS NOW ENDED
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IT WITH ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOF HAS DECIDED NOT TO REOPEN THE MERCURE 100 ASSEMBLY LINE. LIMITED SALE OF MERCURES TO AIR FRANCE WOULD NOT JUSTIFY COST OF RESUMING MERCURE PRODUCTION, FOURCADE HAS EXPLAINED

IN ANSWER TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION. HE ADDED THAT GOF WOULD INSTEAD DIRECT ITS EFFORTS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW AIRCRAFT "USING MODERN ENGINES FRENCH INDUSTRY WILL SOON HAVE AT ITS DISPOSAL", I. E., GE-SNECMA "TEN TON" CFM-56 ENGINE. HE SAID GOF IS STUDYING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR NEW AIRCRAFT TO BE DEVELOPED IN ORDER PROFIT FROM RENEWAL OF AIR FRANCE'S MEDIUM RANGE FLEET TO HELP FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRY AND ITS EXPORTS.

3. THERE HAS STILL BEEN NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF HOW AIR FRANCE WILL BE PERMITTED PROCEED FOR REPLACEMENT OF CARAVELLES, BUT BEST BET STILL SEEMS BE LEASING OF 737'S. LEASING WOULD NOT ONLY HELP CASH FLOW POSITION OF FINANCIALLY STRAINED AIR FRANCE, BUT IT WOULD ALSO BE A SHORT-TERM INTERIM SOLUTION PENDING SALE TO AIR FRANCE OVER LONGER TERM OF NEW MEDIUM RANGE AIRCRAFT BUILT BY OR WITH FRENCH INDUSTRY. LAST POINT IN FOURCADE STATEMENT SUMMARIZED PARA 1 ABOVE SEEMS DEFINITELY CONFIRM THIS IS HOW GOFNOW VIEWS LONGER TERM SOLUTION TO AIR FRANCE FLEET RENEWAL.

4. ACCORDING PRESS, INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE IS TO MEET TODAY, JULY 23, TO DISCUSS FLEET RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AIRCRAFT ON BASIS STUDIES MADE TO DATE. WHILE IN JUNE 7 SPEECH AT PARIS AIR SHOW PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC SAID FRANCE WOULD PROPOSE TO EUROPEAN PARTNERS STUDY BEGINNING 1976 OF DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GENERATION OF CIVIL TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT OR WITH "OTHER" PARTNERS IF EUROPE NOT INTERESTED, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY

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THAT "NEW" AIRCRAFT WOULD BE MERCURE 200 DERIVATIVE OF MERCURE 100 OR FOUR ENGINE DERIVATIVE OF AIRBUS RATHER THAN BRAND-NEW FAMILY OF AIRCRAFT AS SUCH. OR FRANCE COULD PARTICIPATE IN BOEING 7X7 PROJECT INCLUDING PROVISION OF CFM-56 ENGINE. IT IS EVIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT WHATEVER THE ULTIMATE DECISION OF GOF--DEVELOPMENT OF DERIVATIVES OF EXISTING AIRCRAFT, DEVELOPMENT OF NEW FAMILY OF AIRCRAFT WITH FOREIGN PARTNERS, OR ASSOCIATION WITH US INDUSTRY IN CONSTRUCTION OF US-DESIGNED AIRCRAFT--GOF WILL INSIST THAT CFM-56 ENGINE MUST BE PART OF THE PACKAGE.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF RECENT INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS IN US-FRENCH CONTACTS ON POSSIBLE FUTURE COOPERATION, MOST OF THEM CONCERNING BOEING. THESE COULD IMPORTANTLY INFLUENCE GOF PLANS AND HOW THEY MIGHT AFFECT COMPETITIVE SITUATION OUR OWN INDUSTRY MIGHT FACE OVER THE NEXT DECADE. THESE INCLUDE REPORTED VISIT TO BOEING PLANT NEXT WEEK BY DELEGATION
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FROM FRENCH INDUSTRY TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN 7X7 PROGRAM; BOEING ALREADY STATED WILLINGNESS ENVISAGE USE CFM-56 ENGINE FOR 7X7; LONG-TERM ASSIGNMENT OF SNECMA TECHNICIAN TO BOEING PLANT TO ADVISE ON CFM-56 USE FOR 7X7 AND SNECMA SHIPMENT OF FULL-SCALE CFM-56 MOCKUP TO BOEING LATER THIS YEAR; BOEING AND DOUGLAS READINESS TO ENVISAGE USE OF CFM-56 ON 707 AND DC-8 RESPECTIVELY IF CARRIERS ARE INTERESTED; AND SUDDEN SHOW OF INTEREST BY AIR INTER IN 737'S. FULLER DETAILS FOLLOW BY AIRGRAM.

6. PRESS REPORTED JULY 22 NEW WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION HAS JUST BEEN SUBMITTED, THIS TIME TO STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE, INQUIRING WHETHER CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW MEDIUM RANGE AIRCRAFT IN COOPERATION WITH US INDUSTRY IS ENVISAGED AND WHETHER THERE MIGHT ALSO BE BRITISH PARTICIPATION.
GAMMON

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SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE, INQUIRING WHETHER CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW MEDIUM RANGE AIRCRAFT IN COOPERATION WITH US INDUSTRY IS ENVISAGED AND WHETHER THERE MIGHT ALSO BE BRITISH PARTICIPATION.
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